



## Occupational and Environmental Medicine's Calibration Laboratory: Working Behind the Scenes for Readiness, Value, and Jointness

### *By the Numbers, the Calibration Laboratory:*

- Services approximately **5,000** pieces of equipment yearly.
- Saves the Navy over **\$500,000** each year.
- Maintains **100%** of the Hearing Conservation Program audiometers used by the Navy and Marine Corps.

Calibrators. Audiometers. Dosimeters. These three words probably do not evoke images of warfighter readiness. However, a visit to the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OEM) Calibration Laboratory (Cal Lab) demonstrates the importance of these instruments in protecting the auditory fitness of Sailors, Marines and their families.

### *Readiness*

Tinnitus and hearing loss are listed among the most prevalent occupational injury disabilities in military personnel and civilians. To address this, the Cal Lab ensures the equipment used to detect unsafe noise levels and early hearing loss is in top working order. Each year:

- Technicians service nearly 5,000 pieces of equipment from both Fleet and Shore Commands, performing everything from yearly calibrations to major repairs.
- The lab maintains 100% of the Hearing Conservation Program audiometers and approximately 70% of the calibrators, sound level meters and dosimeters used by industrial hygienists and safety officers throughout the Navy and Marine Corps.

"The yearly calibrations are important to ensure the equipment is working accurately. If an audiometer is not functioning properly, hearing issues can be



*A technician performs a calibration on Hearing Conservation Program equipment. Photo courtesy of NMCPHC.*

misdiagnosed or overlooked. It is so critical that existing audiometers are programmed to stop working a year after its last calibration," said Mr. Joe Hawks, Supervisor of the Calibration Laboratory.

### *Value and Jointness*

The Cal Lab operates in one central location and utilizes a single standardized process for services that meets or exceeds the nationally recognized American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards. This central, standardized process allows them to be extremely efficient and cost-effective while handling high workloads. On average, the lab saves the Navy over \$500,000 each year in repair costs by not outsourcing maintenance. In addition, they share their cost cutting and efficiency with the Department of Defense Education Activity by servicing all audiometers used in schools on overseas military installations and by servicing some U.S. Coast Guard equipment on a space available basis.

Eventually, OEM and the Cal Lab would like to not only service and repair 100% of the audiometric equipment used by the Navy and Marine Corps, but to be the first choice for this type of work throughout the Department of Defense. They encourage safety officers and industrial hygienists to contact them with any questions on the process for initiating service requests. To learn more, please visit:

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/occupational-and-environmental-medicine/oahcd/Pages/default.aspx>

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